

Faculty Working Papers

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AND METATHEORY

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P. D. Converse Symposium Paper #3

College of Commerce and Business Administration
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An evaluation of the contributions of a marketing professor require criteria upon which to base the evaluation. Although disagreement would exist in any attempt to prioritize criteria, there would seem to be a general consensus that the following criteria are commonly used in evaluating the contributions of a marketing professor:

1. Impact on business and government
2. Impact on students
3. Impact on the development of theory or a stream of research activity.

Each of these criteria require amplification of the concept of "impact". Impact is not to be confused with interest or even activity. Frequently professors are heard to express themselves as having "an interest" in one area of research or another or in some question of managerial strategy. At other times professors are heard to say they "are doing some things" in one area or another. While most professors, at least in major universities, fit into these categories, this is not the same thing as having impact on the field. Before attempting an evaluation of Professor Howard's contributions, it may be useful to define operationally the issue of impact in each of the three categories of evaluation.

Impact on Business and Government

Impact on business and government might be defined as the magnitude and quantity of business and government decisions that are directly affected by the ideas of the person being evaluated. Impact may be of a direct form, in which the professor is personally involved in the decision, or it may be in an indirect form in which decisions are made based upon an executive's awareness of the professor's books, articles, prior teaching experiences and so forth.

Measurement of the quantity of decisions affected is difficult. The most direct evidence of impact might be ratings by executives involved in decisions of the impact of a specified professor on their decisions. A professor who is a frequent consultant to business and government would be mentioned frequently but there would be need for additional ratings concerning the extent of involvement and the estimated value of the professor's ideas to the project. Presumably, a professor who was not involved in consulting but

remained in his or her study and wrote profound books and articles might be rated as having impact even more often than the less prolific, consulting professor.

Measurement of the magnitude of decisions impacted by a professor might be accomplished by determining the size of the project in relation to the firm's total revenues or the level of the executive impacted by the ideas of a professor. An indirect measure might be the per diem consultant fee which can be commanded by the professor and the quantity of firms which request the professor to participate in executive decisions.

Similar measures are possible in the area of government decisions. A Congressional inquiry at the national level would normally have higher impact than one at the state level in which a professor's ideas are cited as evidence for action or in which the professor is requested to testify. Testimony or service to the Federal Trade Commission on a program of substantial impact in a society might express the personal impact of a professor, for example. The gravity of the case, the magnitude of the proposed legislation, or the size of the program might provide evidence concerning the impact of a professor in a society. There are instances in which courts in delineating the reason for a difficult decision have cited the persuasiveness of testimony offered by expert witness. Measurement of impact must clearly distinguish between the professor who frequently appears as expert witness for any one who will pay his per diem rate and the one who appears in an influential role in those historic cases that set precedents for activities of major consequence to a society.

Impact on Students

There appear to be a few teachers in the scholastic life of nearly every student who stand out from the rest of the faculty. To define the character that accounts for this impact is an overwhelming task that will not be attempted here. Yet, if students or alumni are polled, they do respond with the names of teachers and scholars. These are the names who captivated them with ideas or with personality or with some other attribute to the point that the students were motivated to enter a particular major or gained a gestalt that was to guide their understanding of the field in future years or in some other way substantially affected their perspective on a subject.

The impact of a professor upon students might be measured both quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantity of students reporting the impact of professors could be obtained through polls of alumni. This could be related to the positions of responsibility of the alumni reporting impact by professors. It is both inspiring and humbling for a young professor involved with executive groups and to have presidents of major corporations repeatedly state the impact of a particular professor on their ideas and success. Professors involved in these situations know that most schools have one or two such professors; people who impacted the minds of their students are often given credit by those former students for some of the success obtained in business and governmental responsibility. On occasion, that attitude or belief is so strong that it leads to the behavior of scholarships named in honor of the professor or even endowed chairs.

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There are increasing attempts to measure excellence in teaching abilities. Nearly every campus appears to be experimenting with varied forms of student evaluation of teaching, with awards for being the outstanding teacher, and with more verbalization of the importance of teaching when recruiting and promoting. At the same time, great controversy can be observed concerning the measurement of excellence in teaching. Many computerized ratings exist in which students rate such characteristics as knowledge, communication, interest in students, regular office hours, humor and so forth. The problem with these forms, even if it could be agreed that all of the important attributes are included in the ratings, is that few people agree concerning the weight that should be given to each attribute. Students do not agree, administrators do not agree and colleagues do not agree, and it appears that they do not even agree as to whose judgments are the most relevant!

A simple summary measure. Perhaps the best way of assessing impact of professors upon current (or even former) students would be a simple summary measure of excellence given by each student for each professor at the completion of each course. Each student could simply assign a letter grade of A, B, C, D or E to each professor at the end of the term based upon the student's judgment as to which characteristics of teaching performance are of most importance. Students might or might not inform teachers at the beginning of the term the performance criteria they were using but at the end of each term all students would submit to the registrar a single, letter grade, summarizing the teaching of the professor for the course. The registrar, from these computer grade cards, could easily summarize the grades and inform the professor of his or her grade for the course. The registrar could also keep a record of all grades and prepare a transcript which, though limited in access, could be submitted upon request of the professor to universities recruiting the professor or to other appropriate organizations. A teacher seeking a new position or being considered for a teaching honor could submit his transcript and observers could readily determine whether this was an average (2.0) teacher, a high impact (3.0) teacher or one of those rare individuals of exceptional impact, a 4.0 teacher.

There are those who would probably argue that use of a simple summary measure of teaching is subject to the arbitrary criteria of the students, that it omits the diverse attributes of excellence, that it fails to predict success in life, or has some other defect. Yet, there is considerable precedent for the concept of a single summary measure in academic settings.

Non-personal impact. From a more realistic perspective, it should be recognized that impact as a teacher is not limited to personal teaching. Many great teachers achieve their impact on students through the production of books, or other non-personal forms, which have high impact on the motivation, knowledge or wisdom of students. Perhaps the professor's greatest impact can be measured by the creative activity generated by the teacher's writings that is manifested in future executives, researchers and teachers.

Impact on Research and Theory

The impact of a professor on research and theory appears more readily evaluated because it is more public. Most disciplines are accustomed to research being published in journals for the purpose not only of disseminating ideas but of inviting criticism, replication and amplification. Thus, the criteria for measuring impact would appear to be straightforward. They would include the quantity of disseminations (number of journal articles or books) and the

amount of additional research or theoretical development that ensues from the publications of a scholar. That, however, is an overly simplified view of the problem of determining impact.

Quantitative measures of research and theory. An operational measure of the quantity of research generated by a professor could be obtained by counting the number of published articles or books. This could be further qualified by the quantity of publications of a specified type. At Ohio State, as well as other universities, probably, publications in refereed journals and research monographs carry high weight in the promotion process but publications of the same research in trade journals or working papers carry lesser importance in the assessment of impact.

The belief that impact is achieved more readily through refereed journals than in trade journals is, of course, a value judgment. It is also one that can be debated. A very distinguished professor in a major university recently stated that he believed more impact would be achieved by publishing his research in a trade journal that reaches 20,000 executives than in a Journal of Marketing Research article read by 500 professors.

Quantitative measures of impact on research imply publication of results. There are scholars who do a great deal of significant research but never publish it. In both the C.I.A. and Proctor and Gamble there are undoubtedly researchers conducting large quantities of high quality research which has high impact on the decisions of those organizations. There are also professors who do many research projects but for various reasons never publish the results. They may be good researchers but they are not high impact researchers.

Another quantitative measure of a scholar's contribution to research and theory is the quantity of publications which attempt to refute, confirm or amplify the scholar's published works. A citation index similar to that of Straus and Radel (12) could be developed which measures the number of times a scholar's publications are cited by other scholars over a specified time period. This does not appear to have been done in the marketing discipline but would provide an operational measure of those professors who have most impacted research and conceptual development in this field.

Qualitative measures of research and theory. The assessment of the quality of a scholar's research and theoretical development is more difficult than the quantitative assessment. To some degree, however, a citation index may be a quantitative measure of the quality of a theory. A common, though unsatisfying evaluation of the quality of research and theory, is provided by the commentary of other scholars in the field. Reviews in professional journals, the lectures of qualified scholars, comments and replies in journals and other vehicles provide some basis for public evaluation of research and conceptual development but these are frequently based upon the personal premises or values of the other scholars. A more attractive alternative is the development of rational, logical methods of evaluating the quality of theories, i.e., a theory which is in itself useful in evaluating other theories. Such a theory is termed a metatheory, and is increasingly essential to the evaluation of a scholar's contributions. Although empirical research lends itself to evaluation on the basis

of methodological issues such as sampling design, data quality and mathematical foundations of research tools, conceptual development requires the use of meta-theory.

The plethora of buyer behavior models requires a metatheoretical approach to the evaluation of Professor Howard's work. The published literature reveals that Howard's contributions have been more extensive in conceptual and theoretical development than in empirical research. His later works deal directly with buyer behavior models in contrast to a more general marketing orientation of his earlier works. Yet today there are dozens of buyer behavior models and at probably a dozen models which are specifically decision-process oriented. Thus, if Howard's or Howard and Sheth's work is to be objectively evaluated, a metatheoretical approach must be employed. Although Bartels (2) provides a major introduction of a metatheoretical approach to marketing, the evaluation in this paper will follow closely the approach of Zaltman, Pinson and Angelmar (14) because of their specific orientation to consumer decision models.

PROFESSOR HOWARD'S IMPACT ON BUSINESS AND GOVERNMENT AND ON STUDENTS

It appears that the impact of Professor Howard upon business and government and upon students has been substantial although there is limited evidence to include in a paper of this nature. When Business Week (1) elects to include a story on a professor and his contributions to understanding of buyer behavior that may be an indication or the creation of some awareness of the theory among the business community. Additionally, the acknowledgments section of Howard and Sheth (6, pp ix-x) includes the names of companies such as General Electric, Chemstrand, General Foods, Market Research Corporation of America. While the quantity and quality of impact on these companies is unknown, there is an implication of awareness and some involvement in research that might have considerable impact on decisions.

Consulting experiences also produce increasing encounter with the decision-process approach to researching buyer behavior and developing marketing strategy. While these experiences are not exclusively based upon the work of Howard or Howard and Sheth, they usually involve awareness of their contributions and a comparison of their theories with other approaches. Generally, these companies tend to be among the more sophisticated and have personnel specifically trained in the use of consumer decision process models at Columbia, Ohio State, Berkley, Illinois and similar types of institutions. Perhaps these companies are early in the diffusion process, but there is a good case for increasing impact on business by the models of the type developed by Howard.

The impact of consumer decision models on government agencies and specifically the Federal Trade Commission appears promising. Howard and Hulbert (7) report the relevance of Howard's work and related materials in their summary of the FTC hearings on advertising.

It is difficult to verify the impact of Professor Howard on students in a paper of this nature. While it was not possible to survey his present or former students to obtain their evaluation of his teaching, there is reason to believe that Professor Howard is closer to a 4.0 professor than a 2.0 professor. One indication of this is the quantity and quality of his former doctoral students

at Columbia, several of which have become distinguished researchers and scholars in the discipline of consumer behavior. In addition, it is easy to encounter former M.B.A.'s who are now in key executive positions and in responsible positions at the Federal Trade Commission and other organizations who readily describe the impact of Professor Howard on his students.

PROFESSOR HOWARD'S IMPACT ON RESEARCH AND THEORY

It is in the area of research and theory that this paper focuses major attention.¹ That is the most public and readily evaluated area of his impact and presumably it is the most lasting. It can, however, best be evaluated from a metatheoretical approach and in accomplishing this, the format of Zaltman, Pinson and Angelmar (14) will be followed closely. Although Howard's original theory of buyer behavior has been extensively modified and improved by Sheth and other researchers, this paper will not attempt to treat separately the contributions of Howard from those of Howard and his collaborators.

Howard's model is basically a reductive-functional model and a stimulus-response model. The mediating and important causes of behavior are to be found within the perceptual and learning constructs. The triggering stimuli are to be found among the input variables. It is reductive-functional in the sense it reduces the decision processes of the buyer to a basic determinant (learning) or an independent variable and it attempts to describe the functional relationship between this independent variable and a dependent variable (behavior.)

Howard's model conforms to the general practice in marketing of borrowing concepts and theories from other behavioral sciences and applying them to marketing problems and theories. He appears to do it at least as well as Wroe Alderson, Pierre Martineau, Tom Robertson, Phil Kotler, Sheth and Talarzyk or numerous other contributors to the marketing literature. In the case of Howard, the result is an amalgamation of Hull's learning theory, Osgood's cognitive theory, and Bulne's theory of explanatory behavior blended with Howard's penetrating insights into the issues of marketing strategy. Some of the criteria for evaluating the theory are analyzed below, using the terminology suggested by Zaltman, Pinson and Angelmar. (14)

Formalness and Semantic Logicality of the H-S Model

The "formalness" of a model refers to its structural propositions and operations from which conclusions are drawn. The term "semantic logicality" is

¹Acknowledgment and appreciation is given for extensive assistance in the preparation of this section to the following doctoral students in consumer behavior at Ohio State University: Roger Jenkins, Roy Adler, Donna Chlopax, Jim Hawkins, and Douglas Lambert.

applied to the model's handling of interrelationships between the meanings of the variables which are operative in the decision process. Together, these form the basis for conceptual evaluation of the model.

The formalness of a model may be evaluated by its well-formedness, internal consistency, independence, and strength. These are evaluated below.

Well formedness. One of the major accomplishments of the model is to provide progress in encouraging the interdisciplinary approach to the study of consumer behavior. It is a highly integrative model containing four major components: the stimulus variable, the response variable, the hypothetical constructs, and the exogenous variables. It provides substantial progress by indicating the interrelationships between each of these major components.

Internal consistency. Internal consistency refers to how well the model describes the entire process of buyer behavior in a rigorous manner. The model does provide a comprehensive theory which integrates a variety of approaches and provides a sound internal state.

Independence. Independence refers to how well the model provides a thorough assessment of behavior or how well it handles the variables that operate in the decision-making process of the buyer. It is sufficiently integrative to be considered as independently sound or valid.

Strength. Strength refers to how strongly the model describes the relationship of variables in the decision-making process to each other. In comparison with most comprehensive models of consumer decision-making, the Howard-Sheth model strength is adequate.

The semantic logicity of a model refers to the model's handling of the intervening variables which are operatively defined in order to predict buyer behavior. Of the factors that influence semantic logicity, Zaltman, Pinson and Angelmar propose linguistic exactness, conceptual unity, empirical interpretability, and representativeness.

Linguistic exactness. Linguistic exactness refers to how well the model describes or interprets the operationalization of the variables within the model. This test more than any of the above tests find the model less than convincing. The term perceptual bias, for example, is used in the model. Yet this term has been defined variously in the literature. While this weakness in the Howard-Sheth model is apparent, it must be stated that some other widely used models of consumer behavior are perhaps even weaker and that the Howard Sheth model provides a basically sound linguistic description of the operating variables employed in the model.

Conceptual unity. Conceptual unity refers to how well the model provides overall assessment of incorporating all the elements or variables into the ultimate purpose of producing a model of buyer behavior. This conceptual unity involves the interrelationship of the variables in this process of decision-making. A problem which exists is the lack of clearcut distinction in describing endogenous and exogenous variables. While this does not negate the conceptual unity of the model, it does provide for the potential of some methodological issues to arise. Basically, however, the model conceptually combines its variables into a unified approach to the study of buyer behavior.

Empirical interpretability. Empirical interpretability is concerned with whether or not the theory in principle is testable. That is, does the terminology allow for empirical assessment of the model for the prediction of buyer behavior? The Howard-Sheth model has been subject to more empirical testing than other decision-process models but problems do exist in this area. It does have its roots in stimulus-response learning theory (Hull, Spence) which does provide for examination of behavior in an empirical mode, though with practical problems.

Representativeness. Representativeness is a term employed by Zaltman, Pinson and Angelmar to refer to how well the model actually represents the decision-making process. It is closely related to empirical validity but involves the use to which the theory may be put and the meaning of the actual variables that enter into buyer behavior.

The conceptual criterion of formalness and semantic logicity lead to a positive evaluation of the Howard model. This is quite important to the later discussion of uses of the model which emphasize conceptual understanding and strategy development rather than prediction of behavior, either stochastically or deterministically.

Methodological Criteria

Methodological criteria refer to the methodology of empirically testing a theory. These include empirical testability, methodological simplicity, and measurability/translatability.

Empirical testability. Empirical testability refers to the extent to which a theory can be tested by means of experimentation in order to determine support or refutation. It must be concluded that Howard has not provided an empirical model even in the Howard-Sheth revision. He has offered researchers no equations to explain the main effects or interactions of the input, output, or intervening variables. This limits the testability of the model because researchers themselves have to provide the foundation or empirical definition to the constructs of the model. This creates a dilemma in which if the results do not agree with the proposed hypotheses, faulty empirical definitions can be the reason. A proper defense in such a situation could be that the model was not at fault.

Methodological simplicity. Methodological simplicity refers to whether the constructs employed are easy to understand. Problems exist with the hypothetical constructs although other constructs are straight forward. Applying the model empirically or physically to the consumer behavior process is difficult because the parts of the model that are observable are the input and outcome variables and even some of these are not directly observable. If the use of the model is primarily cognitive or abstract (*i.e.*, for pedagogical purposes or as a "think piece" for research or strategy issues), then the constructs present less of a problem.

Measurability/Translatability. Measurability/translatability refers to the ease with which someone can translate the proposed theory into workable relationships that are testable and simple to apply. The output variables cause considerable difficulty because they are not easy to measure accurately. Although Howard and Sheth provide possible measures of all five output variables, the only easy one to measure and that is uncontaminated is purchase.

Epistemological criteria. Epistemological criteria refer to areas of the theory which provide or limit the bases of knowledge. They are related to methodological criteria because most epistemological criteria should be tested by empirical means. Confirmation, originality, explanatory power, unifying power, and heuristic power are epistemological criteria to be considered.

Confirmation. Confirmation refers to the accuracy or validity of a theory. Research by Farley and Ring (4) has confirmed some of the proposed relationships but others have not been confirmed in the research of Hunt and Pappas (8), and Lutz and Resek (11). More recent research by Farley and Ring (5) and Lehmann, Farley, and Howard (9) have indicated the existence of some relationships that were not part of the original model.

Originality. The concept of originality refers to the attribute of forcing creativity in its application. The empirical difficulties encountered in testing the model have forced considerable creativity.

Explanatory power. Explanatory power refers to the ability for the model to explain the events that occur in relation to the concepts of concern. This concept also includes the idea of external consistency or whether the model is compatible with existing knowledge. The model is quite compatible with existing knowledge because it is derived from that base of knowledge.

Unifying power. Unifying power refers to the extension and relation of previously unrelated areas. The emphasis in this model is more on relating than extending since it relates learning theory, cognitive theory, and personality theory. To some degree, models of consumer behavior, including that of John Howary, have been more adventuresome than the conceptual development in basic disciplines. The other areas of human behavior have generally placed more emphasis on micro models than on the macro models of Howard and other consumer behavioralists.

Heuristic power. Heuristic power refers to a theory's ability to suggest and direct new research. This appears to be an attribute of considerable magnitude.

Criteria for Evaluation and Empirical Testing

A number of criteria, both subjective and objective, are possible in the empirical testing of the Howard model as it has evolved to its present form. Some of the more subjective criteria have been labelled common sense, agreement with known truths, simplicity, and informational value. More objective criteria can be identified as structural parameters, goodness of fit, and predictive validity.

From the outset, serious problems have confronted researchers who have attempted to mathematize and empirically test the Howard-Sheth model. More is known about the problems of the Howard-Sheth model because very little of a similar nature has been attempted with the other comprehensive models of buyer behavior.

Simultaneous Equation Regression Tests. The initial test to be published of the Howard-Sheth model in its entirety was by Farley and Ring in 1970 (4). While confronted with immense definitional problems as well as data handling and other problems, the results were generally reported as favorable even though affected by considerable noise.

Additional tests were reported by Lehmann, Farley and Howard (9), which in some respects were a replication of the earlier econometric simultaneous regression approach. The model was structured in terms of ten equations, one in which each of the 10 endogenous variables was the independent variable. The B coefficients were positive and it was generally concluded that the model itself was maintained to be substantially valid although in need of considerable refinement.

From this research, it began to be apparent that the model had substantial appeal but was in need of extensive testing. Also, it began to appear to some that buyer behavior models are more recursive than their flowchart versions might indicate. It was obvious that substantial problems were arising because of the noise level created by the massive data needed for the model. The difference between endogenous and exogenous variables was not sharp and better operational definitions of many variables were needed. Additional research or commentary was forthcoming.

Lutz and Resek (11) raised several significant criticisms of the Farley and Ring work, the most substantial being the assertion that the statistical analysis employed by Farley and Ring was meaningless. Additionally, Hunt and Pappas (8) pointed out that the unique feature of the Howard-Sheth model is not the variables hypothesized but the linkages between those variables. Since Farley and Ring did not test the linkages, it was asserted that they could not have tested the model. To demonstrate this, Hunt and Pappas constructed the "trivial" HAPPISIMM (the Hunt And Pappas Proposed Incredibly Simple-Minded Model) with which the Howard-Sheth model could be compared and concluded that the Howard-Sheth model was not superior to HAPPISIMM.

Farley and Ring replied to these critiques, pointing out that the criticism was inappropriate to the stage of development of the model and that major questions should be directed to fundamental conceptual and operational issues, not with technicalological issues. They also replied to Lutz and Resek with more substantial discussion of the issues of specifications, definitions, estimations and identification problems. At this point Taylor and Gutman presented the rather convincing position that the operational definitions of Farley and Ring did not reflect the conceptual definitions of Howard and Sheth and asserted that, "Whether Farley and Ring have tested, it seems unlikely that it was the Howard and Sheth model." More specifically, Taylor and Gutman asserted that the problem with operational definitions probably led to common method variance and a "halo effect," that is, a combining of motive, attitude, and intention dependent variables which, in turn, have independent variables clustering around each. They suggested as an alternative, multiple panel tracking through time, but raised substantial pessimism about the potential validation of the model.

From this stream of research, comments and replies, considerable doubt emerges about the potential of testing the model as a whole. The suggestion has evolved that a "micro" approach for researching the Howard-Sheth model may be more productive than a macro approach. A micro approach would investigate the constructs "trying to discover the form of the linkages these constructs have with other related variables."

The approach of Farley and Ring in their 1974 JMR article (5) has taken a new approach with emphasis on description of linkages and interrelationships, with only the variables in the model being pre-specified. If empirical

testing of a model is viewed as a continuous process over time, this specification of linkages may be viewed as a hypotheses generation approach which is compatible with the micro approaches suggested by recent commentators. Farley and Ring have also applied the Automatic Interaction Detector (AID) and canonical correlation to the data with some promise in the attempt to determine relationships between sets of variables.

The most recent analysis by Farley and Ring lead to several conclusions about the model. First, a richer set of feedbacks appear to be operating than was indicated in the original specification of the model. Also, it appears that certain exogenous variables should be prescribed directly in more linkages within the model's structure. Also, components of the endogenous variable Motive were identified. Finally, the canonical correlation analysis leads to the conclusion that the assumption of first order relationship between variables is probably not realistic.

CONCLUSION

The model of Howard and Howard and Sheth has stimulated substantial empirical research but it would be difficult to accept the model as an empirically validated model. Increasingly, there appears to be considerable question whether it will ever be a predictive, empirical model. But the empirical process that has evolved and is evolving has generated a great deal of insight into the definition of variables and the overall goal of explanation. On a cognitive basis, the process has been productive.

Conceptually, it is clear that the Howard-Sheth model, and similar models, have been a decisive influence on consumer behavior in the decade since they were published.

The Howard model has stimulated more published empirical research than any other decision process model. But empiricism, it is concluded, is not the major contribution of Professor Howard. The clue to his significance is found in the preface of his 1965 book, Marketing Theory, in which he became the first marketing scholar to use the term metatheory -- and indicate its need in the field of marketing. That is Professor Howard's contribution, it appears. He has forced this field -- perhaps more than any other person in consumer behavior -- to integrate the micro theories and the concepts consumer researchers have borrowed and developed. He has forced the development of a theory about these minute and diverse theories.

Professor Howard, and his colleague Sheth, have created unrelenting pressure upon an evaluation of all the theory which underlies buyer behavior. They are forcing business and government researchers to have a theory about their little theories and they are doing the same with students and academic researchers. That represents impact, for it is still true that there is nothing so practical as a good theory.

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